

Diesel Tuning



VAUXHALL SHOOTOUT

TAKE A CHEERY GANG OF NORTH WEST CAR ENTHUSIASTS, EACH WITH A GLEAMING MOTOR, AND OFFER THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO PUT THEIR VARIOUSLY TUNED CARS ON A ROLLING-ROAD DYNAMOMETER TO SEE WHO HAS GOT THE HIGHEST POWER AND TORQUE FIGURES. IT'S A RECIPE FOR A HOOT OF A SHOOT-OUT! VICTOR HARMAN RISES TO THE OCCASION...

You'd expect such a day to be filled with V8 petrol sportscars and dragsters but oh no. You can tell by the picture that this isn't the case for this enthusiasts' meet! Oh no – these hot cars are Vauxhall Vectra and a couple of Signums, which you might think make their owners an unlikely bunch to be seeking real performance – but they're all members of Vectra-C.com, a fast-growing 300 plus strong club that's proving that the latest model Vectras and Signums are fast gaining real credibility as serious drivers' cars. And if you've any doubts about this statement you'll have to eat your words when you hear some of the figures that were clocked!

First up on the rollers at 8.45am sharp was Alex Aitken's 150bhp CDTi Vectra 16v, temporarily a standard car apart from a Powerflow exhaust system, after his existing Diagnostix UK Power Tuning Box was taken off to get some "almost standard" figures. These 1.9 CDTi engines usually give healthy figures and we're not sure how much latent power the free-flow exhaust liberates, but the 155bhp and 253 lb ft logged was respectably higher

than the specified 148bhp and 232 lb ft. Next step was to swiftly plug a Tunit conversion into the car's harness and, with a few tweaks, the Tunit boys soon had Alex's car registering a thundering 197bhp and 314 lb ft – a gain of around 25 per cent! Alex was quite impressed, but now more curious than ever to see what his Diagnostix Box was giving – so swiftly back on with that, and the discovery that its 193bhp and 306 lb ft, although very respectable, hadn't quite matched the Tunit figures. Food for thought for all of the gathered owners (already bantering about whose tuning package was best), but there was no doubt that Alex's car was one hellishly fit motor!

Next up was Paul Weston's 2.0 Turbo petrol model, fitted with a KN induction kit but otherwise standard, which somewhat disappointed with just 171bhp against the 173bhp factory figures. That gave all the diesel boys a good laugh – although it was all on a very friendly basis and Paul was not the least bit disheartened!

Now Tony Critchlow rolled his 150bhp 16v 1.9 CDTi onto the dyno – with fingers crossed that,

after Alex's run, his own Diagnostix UK tuned car with a KN filter wasn't going to leave him red-faced! One abortive run, when the traction control chimed in, led to another (with traction switched out), and the figures of 186bhp and 300 lb ft confirmed a very respectable gain of about 24 per cent over standard specification, but left him a touch short of Alex's fine figures.

Now it was onto the heavy stuff! Spanner-wielder "Ossypete" Fowles' 3.0 CDTi Signum (factory figures 174bhp and 273 lb ft) had a Dragon Performance conversion fitted and his first run gave 194bhp and 308 lb ft which left all the 1.9 CDTi owners quietly grinning. Moving the 'jumpers' two spaces on the adjustable box gave one dramatic and very smoky run at 197bhp that left the audience choking, but then backing it off by just one step left Pete's figures topping out at a meaty 198bhp – with the only smoke coming from the tyres! No mean numbers – but maybe an indication that the V6's engine is not as responsive to tuning as the newer 1.9litre 'four'?

Ian C, who'd just recently had figures of well



over 200bhp on his Tunit modded V6 CDTi was now getting quietly confident that his V6 CDTi was going to scoop the honours – but we'd have to wait until the very last run of the day to find out! (He was very noisily confident actually, even though he's quite a shy and retiring guy, who spends most of his time brewing endless cups of tea!)

Next on the rollers was another 1.9 CDTi 150bhp 16v, in bog standard tune, with owner Lee Cave looking just a little bit impressed and tempted by what he'd already seen. His standard motor measured a very fit 153bhp and 242 lb ft, and he was more than eager to see what the Tunit boys could get from his lump with one of their magic boxes. Well 192bhp and 305 lb ft sounded plenty good enough on paper, but it still needed a run out on the road to really convince Lee, where the wheelspin in third gear (on admittedly damp roads) was enough to tell him that something seriously different was going on under that bonnet. As I was to hear later, he'd raided a cash machine and gone straight back the next Monday and bought that Tunit box!

Next place of honour on the rollers went to organiser Andrew Suter, whose 1.9 CDTi 150 was Dragon Performance converted, and with which Andrew was already quite chuffed. At the standard setting his engine clocked 167bhp and 268 lb ft, but Andrew was quite convinced that there was more there for the asking. With the unit's settings raised to +2 his power output then topped out at 179bhp

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Diesel Tuning



The Vectra 120bhp 8v CDTi engine.



The Vectra 150bhp 16v CDTi engine.

and 281 lb ft and, although this was a decent way down on some of the days' other figures, Andrew is currently working closely with the Dragon technical boys on further development of this particular conversion, which sells at a relatively modest price.

Another Andrew, forum name of ABYSS, threatened some real action – perhaps forcing us all to disappearing into a black hole, –and stepped up next. His motor was another Dragon Performance tuned car, this time a 3.0 V6 CDTi Vectra, and again started on the standard zero setting. A thunderous run clocked 189bhp and just over 305 lb ft with some muted jeers from the boys. That was a bit down on Ossypete's numbers, but again development work is continuing on this conversion and Andrew was hoping to find out just why anything above the standard setting causes something of a misfire, when there seems to be plenty of scope for more power and torque.

The popularity of the 3.0 V6 with the Vectra-C.com boys was shown by yet another shining example, with proud owner 'Bruceybonus' Jackson was smiling confidently in the hope that his Tunit modified car was possibly going to set a new high for the day. Well, it nearly did – but it still left the 1.9 CDTi boys with wide grins on their faces, failing to top Alex's 1.9 CDTi figure of 197bhp by just 3bhp. We couldn't get an accurate torque figure, Bruce's car being an auto, the runs were a bit dramatic, and a brief attempt to tweak the Tunit for a bit more go generated far too much smoke, leaving the V6 boys looking a bit sheepish, but

Bruce quite unabashed!

While all this action was happening I got a bit distracted talking to all the dieselheads and "Big Phil" Hunt sneaked his big black 3.2 GSI petrol machine onto the dyno – and the first that I heard was a big cheer from all the previously rather subdued petrolheads! Now 3.2-litres is quite a bit of metal and the standard figures should be 208bhp and 221 lb ft of torque, so Phil was more than pleased with his 219bhp and 230 lb ft from a totally standard engine, which put his motor top of the list so far – albeit with a 1.3litre advantage over the best 1.9 CDTis. Would anybody better these figures?

Next came a rather special case – a wannabe 150bhp 16-valver that wasn't! No wonder owner Mark had been a bit disappointed with performance and had already had a Diagnostics Box fitted – for the gathered crowd soon spotted as soon as the engine cover came off that Mark's lump was only a 120bhp eight-valver, in spite of all the right badges and paperwork, and the price he'd paid only a few months back – all claiming it was a sixteen-valver! But his figures of 131bhp and 233 lb ft (specification for the eight-valver is 120bhp and 206lb.ft) with the engine returned to standard tune lit up his face, and his grin broadened when run with a new Tunit box, with absolutely no smoke showing, shot this up to 166bhp and 283 lb ft. Who really needs a 150bhp sixteen-valver, when you can get figures like this from a 120bhp car? We don't

yet know the outcome of Paul's visit to his supplying dealer, but we suspect that he may even settle for a refund and power that's 16bhp up on a standard sixteen-valver with a Tunit fitted!

Not-so-shy 'Drinky' Chris Drinkald next wheeled his 2.2 DTi onto the rollers, with much jeering, as the 1.9 CDTi boys were becoming a bit arrogant by now. Standard figures for Drinky's motor are just 123bhp and 207 lb ft and his modified airbox and KN filter may have eased the power up just a touch, but the best applause of the day broke out when figures of 139bhp and 228 lb ft flashed onto the screen. That's a hellish good set of figures for an old 2.2 DTi – and a fine tribute to Drinky's good maintenance that left him wearing one of the biggest grins of the day, and wondering whether a bit of electronic tuning might make him even happier still!

So now we were down to the real nitty-gritty, with just Ian C's 150bhp CDTi waiting to go on the rollers while Ian finished his fifth brew of the day. As I've said, his Tunit modified motor had not long since clocked 221bhp and 386 lb ft on the very same dynamometer and that left him pretty confident of edging Big Phil's 3.2 V6 out of the top spot. But this was not to be – and Tunit will soon be looking more closely to find out just why it was a touch off-colour that day! A first figure of 193bhp then led onto 197bhp and a final best shot of 210bhp, which isn't too shabby – but that previous 220bhp plus just wasn't there – and both Ian and the Tunit boys want to know why! We weren't too sure whether Ian was having another brew or just trying desperately to find a few more horses but he eventually turned up for the group photo!

How best can we sum up the day? Lee Cave's



Where the Tunit conversion plugs in.

words just about say it all, – *"I couldn't have found a better forum and group of people. The rolling road day was the first meet I had been to, and it was excellent. Everyone made me feel very welcome and an integral part of their 'clan.'"*

That sounds like a great recruiting invitation for any other interested Vectra C owners, who can find the club's web site on www.vectra-c.com and read all about members' tuning exploits and plenty of other useful info on a model that's now very far from being a Clarkson joke. The day was set up by Andrew Suter, North West Regional Organiser for the club, with much time and help from Adam at Tunit HQ in Chorley and the hard-working technicians there, to whom many thanks must also go for running as many as 40 or 50 rolling road tests on the day.



This might be all you see of Alex's 190plus bhp Veccy!



Laying the power down.

I can echo Lee's words about the group and I know that they've had a few other real fun days this year in various spots around Britain. Let's hope that maybe we can arrange another "Shoot-Out" with another owner group some time soon and find out whether some other motors can match the fine tuning potential of these Vauxhall CDTi engines, and the enthusiasm of the vectra-c.com boys!

Torque = LB FT

DIESELS

SORTED BY POWER

		BHP	GAIN %	TORQUE	GAIN %	TUNER
2.2 DTi	CHRIS D	139	N/A	228	N/A	STANDARD
1.9 CDTi 120 8V	MARK	166	38	283	37	TUNIT
1.9 CDTi 150 16V	ANDY S	179	19	281	21	DRAGON
1.9 CDTi 150 16V	TONY C	186	24	300	29	DIAGNOSTIX
3.0 V6 CDTi	ANDY P	189	9	304	11	DRAGON
1.9 CDTi 150 16V	LEE C	192	28	305	31	TUNIT
3.0 V6 CDTi	BRUCE J	194	11	N/A	N/A	TUNIT
1.9 CDTi 150 16V	ALEX A	197	31	314	35	TUNIT
3.0 V6 CDTi	PETER F	198	14	308	13	DRAGON
3.0 V6 CDTi	IAN C	210	21	330	21	TUNIT

(GAIN % OVER FACTORY FIGURES)

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Do you have a diesel car owners club that fancies a 'Shoot Out' Day? If you do, drop an email to Garth on: garthsumpter@dieselcar.com

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